

tención de Adorno dentro del contexto de su obra. El arte debe estar comprometido, alejado de toda ortodoxia, con la historia y con la vida y «al escribir después de Auschwitz no se le puede poner fin, a no ser que el género humano quiera renunciar a sí mismo».

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KIKO MORA

Linda M. Willem, ed. *Carlos Saura: Interviews*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003, 179 pp.

Carlos Saura was, for over twenty-five years, the most recognizable face of Spanish cinema for international audiences. His career, which spans the final decade of the Franco dictatorship and the years of Spain's transition to democracy, continues to be a complex blend of personal narratives, often rooted in the memories of the Civil War (*La prima Angelica*, *Dulces horas*, *¡Ay, Carmela!*), dance films with a pronounced Hispanic flavor (*Carmen*, *El amor brujo*, *Sevillanas*, *Flamenco*), and idiosyncratic versions of cinematic biography (López de Aguirre [*El Dorado*], Antonieta Rivas Mercado [*Antonieta*], San Juan de la Cruz [*La noche oscura*], Francisco de Goya [*Goya en Burdeos*]). In Saura's rise to prominence as the preeminent representative of Spain in the film medium and his eventual eclipse by a younger generation of filmmakers like Almodóvar, Medem and Amenábar, we are able to read the gradual evolution of Spanish cinema itself. Linda Willem's collection of seventeen interviews with Saura, covering four decades, contributes in subtle but important ways to our understanding of that evolution.

Saura's cinema is deeply rooted in Spanish cultural history, but also includes efforts to develop a transnational Hispanic genre, aimed at broadening the market for his films beyond Spain and the European art film circuit. This latter group includes co-productions with Mexico (*Antonieta*, *El Dorado*), and Argentina (*El sur*, *Tango*). Throughout these interviews, including an excellent one by Willem herself, we get a sense not only of the conceptual background of Saura's cinematic style as it evolves over time, but also of his distinctly independent way of using film to explore both social and personal aspects of Spanish culture.

As Willem notes, the interviews were chosen to provide a running commentary on Saura's career from his earliest feature film, *Los golfos* (1959), through *Buñuel y la mesa del Rey Salomón* (2001), a range of some thirty-three films. The constant that unites the often uneven series of encounters with critics is Saura's insistent self-conscious embrace of film authorship. He is most revealing when he insists, as he so often does in these interviews, that he is an auteur, implying a high art conception of his filmmaking activities that protects him from the criticism of local film reviewers and interviewers. In his self-identification with auteurism, he

has, of course, taken the critic's tool and made it the filmmaker's weapon. While capturing Saura «in the act», that is, being an auteur for the critics, the collection also, perhaps not inadvertently, gives the English-language reader a sense of Spain's feisty film reviewing establishment as it seeks to hold Saura accountable as a «national» auteur for representing contemporary Spain to the outside world.

The best of these interviews include Valeria Ciompi's engaging conversation with Saura on the little-known *Antonieta*, his first film shot outside of Spain, which enables the director to explain his own approach to historical figures with whose life and ideas he identifies, and Antonio Castro's 1996 interview on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of Spanish cinema. In this latter piece, Saura reminisces about each of the works in his filmography and thus provides in miniature a film-by-film autobiography.

The strength of the volume lies in Willem's intelligent selection and careful preparation of some key interviews for English-language audience. As well, the gentle but probing questions in her own interview with Saura elicit a coherent, non-adversarial discussion of the filmmaker's use of image, color and music in the shaping of his more recent films. Similarly insightful are Ciompi's questions as they enable Saura to expound on his refusal to differentiate between documentary and fiction films. These remarks provide readers with a useful insight into the logic that underlies the often dazzling double-layered narratives that have become one of the signatures of his authorial style.

The limitations of the volume derive mostly from the incompleteness of the genre of film interview collections and the formulation of this series, in particular, which requires the exclusion of critical writings other than the editor's introduction and the actual interviews. In Saura's case, the exclusion of his revealing essay «Memorias de la Guerra Civil», which appeared in the Spanish edition of *Penthouse Magazine* in 1978, means that we only get a partial, random and often repetitive recitation of the critical material related to his experiences during the war. Given the restrictions of the series format, one might have wished for a more extensive background discussion of topics that are only mentioned in passing in the interviews but are still a pivot of debate for students of Spanish cinema, such as the influence of neorealism on Saura's early work. As well, it would have been helpful for Willem to comment on some of the critical issues not even alluded to in the interviews, such as Saura's relation to the Spanish film industry and the generational shift in Spanish audiences that occasioned his subsequent fall from popular favor in the 1990s. *Carlos Saura Interviews* is, nonetheless, a welcome contribution to English-language commentary on Spanish film. It should prove a useful companion to both his films and the critical literature on Saura's cinema.